

**Weekly Column: EdTalk**  
**Superintendent of Schools: Dr. David Leach**  
**September 4, 2024**

Just two weeks ago, Wildcats began practicing for the Fall 2024 season! Current and prospective Wildcats across all eight of our fall sports teams reported to their respective camps, set their goals for 2024, and got to work... and play!

Every year, we look forward to this “unofficial” kick-off of the fall athletic season, for the renewed sense of energy and spirit that it brings to our school grounds. Although that may not quite compare with the excitement that comes with this week, it is always fantastic seeing our coaches and athletes reconnecting and getting back into the swing of things. It is a particular joy, and something that speaks volumes about our athletics program, to watch how supportive and encouraging our coaches and returning Wildcats are to the many young, aspiring athletes who are just beginning their WV athletics careers.

This year, every ascending and aspiring athlete was challenged to bring Pride, Accountability, Commitment, and Trust (P.A.C.T.) to being a Wildcat. Last week, every Wildcat gathered in the high school auditorium for a presentation about these four values. WV Athletic Director and football coach Gregory Sirico let his competitors know that these four qualities are expected of every Wildcat student-athlete, both as competitors and district ambassadors.

“There is a legacy that you are a part of, a tradition that you are a part of,” said Coach Sirico. “It’s a very important tradition to a lot of people, and with membership comes responsibility.”

During the assembly, Coach Sirico was joined by WVHS Principal Georgianna Diopoulos, and coaches Warren Patafio, Dennis O’Connor, and Michael Potter, who each elaborated on one of the four qualities, providing real-world context and setting expectations for the students.

I personally reminded the athletes that they represent our school district and emphasized the high expectations for their conduct. I reviewed the behavioral expectations with them, along with the consequences that will follow if these standards are not upheld.

With that said, taking a walk around various practices, the enthusiasm and remarkable Wildcat spirit that Warwick is known for, has been evident. As usual, Wildcats preseason has delivered its annual reminder of just how much teamwork and sportsmanship define the Wildcat culture.

So, with all this excitement in the air, here is a quick refresher on the Wildcat teams that compete in New York State Section IX each fall:

- Football: modified, junior varsity and varsity
- Soccer: boys and girls modified, junior varsity and varsity
- Girls tennis: junior varsity and varsity
- X-Country: boys and girls modified and varsity
- Volleyball: modified, junior varsity and varsity

- Girls swimming: varsity
- Cheerleading: junior varsity and varsity
- Crew Club

The first Wildcat teams reporting to camp this year were the varsity and junior varsity Football and Cheerleading teams, who began practices on August 19. The football players met bright and early in the WVHS Wildcats Hall of Champions before jumping right into conditioning and drills with Coach Sirico and his staff. The junior varsity and varsity cheerleaders got ready for the season, accompanied by Coach Sullivan, at the National Cheerleaders Association Cheer Camp from August 19 - 22, where they won nearly every award there was to be earned. We've got spirit, yes we do!

All of our other fall sports teams began practice last week. The Boys X-Country team hit the ground running on Monday with Coach Potter, on the Tim St. Lawrence Track at the High School. At the same time, just down the road at Sanfordville Elementary, the Girls X-Country team gathered at the Trevor Jahn Pavilion, ready for their first team run with Coach Candia.

The sounds of tennis shoes squeaking and the pop of volleys were echoing through the middle school parking lot, as the varsity and junior varsity Girls Tennis teams returned to the courts with Coach Zwart. The Girls Volleyball team was also back at the net, with both the varsity and junior varsity teams meeting in the High School Gymnasium with Coach Thomas.

The varsity and junior varsity Boys Soccer teams met for a Monday morning mile on the track and some weight room time with Coach O'Connor. The Girls Soccer players reported to Tom Lorgan Field at Sanfordville Elementary for tryouts with Coach Mann. The Girls Swimming and Diving teams dove back into their routine in the WVHS pool. The swimmers and Coach Beneat were in the pool in the morning; Coach Voloshin and the divers were there in the afternoon. And speaking of water, the Warwick Valley Crew Club is also looking forward to getting back in it, and begins training in mid-September.

Modified Sports (WVMS athletics) began this week! In fact, the first practices and tryouts were held today.

New school year, new season. Go, Wildcats! Here's the Wildcats Week 1 schedule:

- **Tuesday, September 3, 2024**
  - Girls Varsity Soccer (non-League) vs. Beacon City (home)
- **Wednesday, September 4, 2024**
  - Girls Varsity Tennis (non-league) vs. Pine Bush (away)
  - Girls JV Tennis (non-league) vs. Pine Bush (home)
  - Boys Varsity Soccer (non-league) vs. Monroe-Woodbury (away)
  - Boys JV Soccer (non-league) vs. Monroe-Woodbury (away)
  - Girls Varsity Swimming & Diving (non-league) vs. Valley Central (home)
  - Girls JV Volleyball (non-league) vs. Middletown (home)
  - Girls Varsity Volleyball (non-league) vs. Middletown (home)

- **Thursday, September 5, 2024**
  - Girls Varsity Soccer (non-league) vs. Pine Bush (away)
  - Girls JV Soccer (non-league) vs. Pine Bush (away)
- **Friday, September 6, 2024**
  - Girls JV Tennis (non-league) vs. Pine Bush (away)
  - Boys Varsity Soccer (league) vs. Washingtonville (home)
  - Boys JV Soccer (league) vs. Washingtonville (home)
- **Saturday, September 7, 2024**
  - Girls Varsity Volleyball vs. New Paltz (home)

*Here are some highlights from our schools this week:*

### **Park Avenue Elementary School**

Students, parents, and teachers got together on Friday to kick off the new school year with the annual PTA-sponsored Ice Cream Social – always a great opportunity for parents and students to meet their new teacher, drop off supplies, ask questions, and simply get to know the Park Avenue community. We are so grateful for our PTA’s support! Here is just a small sampling of the events they organize in support of our students, teachers, and the community during the early part of the school year:

- PBIS Poster Contest that helps students demonstrate their awareness of our behavioral and other expectations.
- Supporting the Park Avenue Elementary School contingent that participates in each year’s Homecoming Parade.
- Teacher Appreciation events
- Drama Club support
- Halloween Costume Swap & Halloween Happenings

We extend our deepest appreciation to the Park Avenue PTA and hope every Park Avenue parent will consider joining to support their efforts, which are always aimed at uplifting our students’ experiences.

On the same day as the Ice Cream Social, our faculty and staff met as a whole to kick off the new school year. After collectively reflecting on last year’s work, we engaged in various activities to support our instructional efforts and, overall, our school’s contributions towards the district’s vision, the Portrait of a Graduate. It is clear that all our teachers are excited to meet their new students and reach new heights during the 2024-2025 school year!

### **Sanfordville Elementary School**

On August 26, Sanfordville opened its doors for students and their families who are new to the Warwick Valley School District. They were led on a tour by Ms. Geysen, our School Counselor, had opportunities to walk the halls and learn a little bit more about everything Sanfordville prior to the first day of school on Tuesday, September 3.

Throughout the week, teachers, instructional aides, and monitors returned to Sanfordville to attend planning meetings, training sessions, and to set up their classrooms. A very special thank you to Ms. Scheurman and the office helpers for their hard work preparing for the school year. A special shout out to Mr. Zeedyk, Sanfordville's new head custodian, and his team for getting our building ready to open! Mr. Harrington and his crew at Buildings & Grounds have worked diligently to make upgrades and improvements around the building. Thank you, again, to everyone who plays a role in making our school beautiful and ready for learning!

Sanfordville hosted its Meet the Teacher Open House and PTA Ice Cream Social on Friday! Students and their families visited the building, met their teachers, saw their classrooms, and dropped off their school supplies for the start of the school year. Then, all of our students, their families, and teachers enjoyed a sweet treat at our PTA-sponsored Ice Cream Social. Thank you to everyone who attended, and to all who helped make this possible!

### **Warwick Valley Middle School**

It was an exciting final week of summer at the middle school! Monday and Tuesday, the building welcomed parents and students over two days for our traditional "Look-See," offering a chance to explore the school and familiarize themselves with their new schedules for the year. The hallways were buzzing with the energy of eager families and students. Seventh- and eighth-grade students were busy moving into their lockers, making the space their own. The familiar and friendly faces of our Wildcat Ambassadors were there to guide the way, helping to ease any new student (and parent) worries by answering questions and providing direction throughout the building.

On Tuesday, there was additional excitement, with the summer training of our new Ambassador recruits. Under the guidance of our dedicated counseling team – Mr. Menkens, Ms. Ogden, and Ms. Wright – as well as the experienced, returning, ambassadors – these students engaged in a variety of team-building activities designed to foster camaraderie and teamwork. They explored the school, got familiar with the layout, and gained insights into their new roles. The training session culminated in an official induction, marking the beginning of their journey as Wildcat Ambassadors.

Following their training, the new recruits quickly stepped into their roles on Day 2 of the "Look-See" event. They enjoyed a festive pizza party lunch to celebrate their new responsibilities, and got right to Ambassador work, joining their fellow Ambassadors, helping parents and students navigate the building. Their enthusiasm and fresh perspectives added to the day's exciting atmosphere, ensuring that the final week of summer ended on a high note and setting a positive tone for the upcoming school year. Everyone is excited for Tuesday, September 3, when WVMS opens its doors for 2024-2025.

## **Warwick Valley High School**

On Tuesday, Warwick Valley High School hosted a Driver's Awareness Forum for its junior and senior students. This important event was a requirement for students seeking to obtain a parking permit, which will allow them to park in designated student parking spaces on campus.

The forum educated students on the responsibilities and safety measures associated with driving, particularly in a school environment, and covered topics including safe driving practices, adhering to speed limits, and the consequences of distracted driving. Students also received guidance on school parking regulations and the importance of being considerate of others while using the parking facilities.

Attendees left the forum with a deeper understanding of the importance of responsible driving, especially in a school setting, and the role it plays in ensuring the safety of all students and staff. The event was a critical step in promoting a safe and conscientious driving culture within the school community.

On Wednesday, we welcomed incoming freshmen and new students with a comprehensive orientation program designed to help them transition smoothly into high school life. Thank you to our dedicated Wildcat Student Ambassadors, who served as mentors and guides throughout the morning. During the orientation, students met with school counselors and members of the administrative team, who provided valuable insights into the expectations and responsibilities of being a high school student at Warwick Valley. They were able to pick up a Chromebook, if they needed one. Our Wildcat Ambassadors facilitated engaging icebreakers, creating a welcoming environment and helping new students feel comfortable as they began their high school journey. They also answered any questions that the new students had, helping them feel supported and informed.

The orientation was a great success. It helped new students feel confident and excited about joining the WVHS community, and set a positive tone for the start of the new school year!